

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**REPORT**

**Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh (C),**  
**Baile an Easpaig,**  
**Corcaigh**  
**Uimhir rolla: 19000E**

**Date of inspection: 15 January 2015**



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF**  
**OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION**  
**AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

## 1. Introduction

Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh Cailíní is a primary school for girls situated in Bishopstown in Cork City. The school is under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross. The school staff comprises of an administrative principal, ten mainstream class teachers, a learning-support teacher and a resource teacher. A further two teachers work on a part-time basis providing support to pupils in special education settings. One of these positions is funded directly by the board of management. The current enrolment stands at 274 pupils and attendance levels are very good. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

## 2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the **main strengths** of the work of the school:

- The school has a professional, diligent, committed and supportive board of management.
- The principal is hardworking, highly organised and maintains high expectations for pupils and staff.
- The teaching staff is deeply committed to the school.
- The very active parents' association and general parent body contribute in a significant way to the life of the school.
- The pupils are courteous, co-operative and very well behaved.
- High quality teaching and learning were observed in the subjects evaluated.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- A review of whole-school curricular planning should be undertaken to further enhance educational provision in the school.
- Formal mechanisms for incorporating parental perspectives into policy formation should be developed.
- Sa Ghaeilge, b'fhiú réimse níos leithne d'ábhar léitheoireachta a chothú.  
*It is recommended that the range of Irish reading material available in the school be extended.*

## 3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is properly constituted and operates in a very professional manner. It is committed to providing support and effective direction to the school. Board members have a broad skill base and clearly designated roles. The chairperson visits the school regularly and good communication exists between the board, the teachers and the parents' association. The board has been instrumental in ensuring that the school is very well maintained and that a broad range of educational resources are available to teachers and pupils. It is supportive of the provision of a range of co-curricular and extra curricular activities which are available for the benefit of pupils. Financial reports are provided at each meeting, transparent and well organised accounts are maintained and school finances are certified on an annual basis.
- The principal is deeply committed to the school. She is hardworking, highly organised and employs an effective, systematic approach to the management of the school. She

clearly understands the needs of the pupils and maintains high expectations for both pupils and staff. She is very well supported by the deputy principal and the special-duties teachers who have a considerable range of responsibilities which they carry out with dedication. As each postholder makes a significant contribution to school management, it is recommended that they are given the opportunity to provide an account of their work to the board at agreed intervals. It is also recommended that in-school management duties be reviewed regularly to reflect the changing priorities of the school.

- The management of school resources is to be commended. The school buildings and grounds are maintained to a high standard. A comprehensive range of teaching and learning resources is used very effectively and classrooms are well resourced with libraries, information and communications technology (ICT) and special educational needs (SEN) materials. A significant investment in the provision of interactive whiteboards has taken place recently. Arrangements whereby the school shares joint facilities with the adjoining boys' primary school enhances access to curricular activities. Secretarial, caretaking and cleaning staff all assist in the effective day-to-day operation of the school. The school's special-needs assistants provide high levels of support to individual pupils in classrooms and during recreation times. The board of management employs a teacher in addition to the staffing allocation provided by the Department of Education and Skills. In this regard, the board is advised to consider its appointment procedures in view of Circular 0031/2011.
- Relationships are very positive and communication among the school community is of a high standard. The use of newsletters, text-a-parent, class induction meetings, formal and informal parent-teacher meetings and the school website all contribute to successful levels of home school communication. The parents' association supports the work of the school through organising events and engaging in fundraising activities. A meeting with the parents' association representatives, together with information from parental questionnaires, reveal very positive attitudes towards the school
- Pupils are polite, well mannered and very well behaved. There is a caring school climate and classroom interactions are positive and affirming. The pupils are interested and committed learners. The teachers' approach to the management of pupils is encouraging, affirmative and successful. The results of pupils' questionnaires indicate that the vast majority feel safe in school, enjoy their lessons and believe that Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh Cailíní is a good school.

#### **4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- An extensive range of administrative policies clearly contribute to the very effective daily operation of the school. In addition, a very useful summary document provides concise and clear guidance to all staff on operational matters. It is now recommended that the board of management reviews the school's admissions policy to ensure it fully reflects the inclusive nature of the school. In addition, it should establish a process through which parents' perspectives can be incorporated into policy formulation.
- A range of whole-school curricular plans was available for review during the evaluation. There is a need to introduce a clear timeframe for reviewing and updating these documents. All teachers prepare long-term and short-term planning and complete monthly progress reports. Mechanisms to strengthen the impact of whole-school curricular planning on individual teacher planning and practice should be implemented.

- The school has engaged in substantial work in school self-evaluation (SSE) with a particular emphasis on poetry in literacy and language in Mathematics. Work to link SSE targets with development in pupil-learning outcomes is ongoing.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

## 5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The overall learning experience provided for pupils in this school is of a high quality. The standard of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Attractive and stimulating learning environments are evident throughout the building. Teachers approach their work with enthusiasm and confidence and a wide range of effective teaching styles is used across the school. Classroom management styles are affirming and highly effective. The pupils are motivated and a good balance between cooperative, collaborative and individual learning activities was observed.

- Tá ard chaighdeán bainte amach sa Ghaeilge ins an scoil seo. Múintear curaclam páiste-lárnach bunaithe ar theamaí a oireann d'aois agus do thaithí na ndaltaí sna ranganna éagsúla. Tá múinteoireachta, foghlamtha agus gnóthachtáil na daltaí go han mhaith. Baintear feidhm as réimse leathan de modhanna múinte chun na daltaí a spreagadh an Ghaeilge a labhairt i gcomhthéacsanna cumarsáideacha. Bhí comhrá beirte and dramaíocht ar siúl sna ranganna. Tá stór leathan de rannta agus dánta ag na daltaí agus ceol Gaelach le fáil i ranganna áirithe. Bhí siad in ann ceisteanna a chur agus a fhreagairt agus a dtuairimí a phlé ar bhonn simplí. Léann na daltaí go muiníneach. Tá béim ar an ngramadach agus tá caighdeán na scríbhneoireachta go maith. D'fhonn cur le scileanna na ndaltaí, ba cheart úsáid a bhaint as réimse níos leithne d'ábhar léitheoireachta tríd an scoil.

*There is a high standard of Irish in this school. A child centred curriculum, based on themes relevant to the age and interest levels of pupils in the various classes, is taught. Teaching, learning and the achievement levels of the pupils are very good. A broad range of teaching methodologies are employed to encourage pupils to speak the language in communicative contexts. Paired conversation and drama were observed in classrooms. Pupils have a good repertoire of poems and songs and Irish music is taught in some classrooms. They were able to pose and answer questions and engage in short conversations on their thoughts and opinions. Pupils read with confidence. There is an emphasis on grammar and the standard of writing is good. To further enhance pupil achievement in these areas, it is recommended that the range of reading material in use be extended throughout the school.*

- In English, high quality teaching was observed during the evaluation. Pupils' oral language skills are developed through talk and discussion, poetry and discrete provision. Pupils were engaged positively in activities such as literacy lift off, book clubs and station teaching. Very good use is made of a range of materials including graded readers, libraries and class novels. Whole-school assessment data indicate good to very good levels of pupil attainment in reading. Pupils' presentation of work is of a very high standard and there is a whole-school emphasis on writing in a variety of genres.
- The teaching of Mathematics is a significant strength in the school and high quality teaching was observed during the evaluation. Whole-school approaches to the development of mathematical language and to number operations enhance educational provision. Active and collaborative learning activities are utilised and concrete manipulative materials are used successfully to support the consolidation of learning in

classes. Mathematical games are used to good effect to advance computational skills. Standardised assessment data available in the school indicate high to very high levels of pupil attainment in Mathematics.

- The school's provision for Physical Education (PE) includes a wide range of activities incorporating all of the curricular strands. All lessons observed were well structured with a clear focus on skills development. High levels of positive pupil participation were evident in classes observed. The shared facility used for physical education lessons during the evaluation provides opportunities for engaging in a broad range of activities. It is recommended that the whole-school plan be revised to enhance continuity and progression in curriculum implementation for this subject throughout the school. The roles and responsibilities of external tutors and instructors in enhancing the PE programme should be included in the plan. Consideration should also be given to extending the assessment approaches in PE.
- A broad range of assessment approaches are used to good effect throughout the school. The school administers screening and standardised tests annually and the results are collated at a whole-school level. The school has also engaged in longitudinal tracking of individual pupils' performance in literacy and numeracy. Teachers design and administer a range of tests and maintain samples of pupils' work indicating progression in attainment across a range of subjects. Commendable use is made of checklists, profiles and work samples. Pupils' written work is regularly monitored and positive evaluative comments are provided by the teachers.

## **6. Quality of Support for Pupils**

- Professional high-quality support for pupils with additional needs was observed in SEN settings. There is a balance between in-class support and withdrawal of pupils both individually and in small groups. The lessons observed were well planned and characterised by positive teacher-pupil interactions. All teachers plan diligently for their work and examples of clear learning targets were noted. In some settings, it is recommended that the effective practice in individual education plan (IEP) formulation be extended to ensure closer alignment between learning targets and available assessment data. The system for tracking and monitoring pupil progress in SEN settings would benefit from further development.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

**Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

It is with great pleasure that we note that due recognition is given in the report to the exceptional nature of this school.

We pledge to support the principal and staff in endeavouring to follow through on the recommendations made. Some of this work has already begun in session's undertaking during Haddington Road time slots and full facilitation of the implementation of the recommendations will be supported.

Due to the geographical proximity of the school to third level institutions, U.C.C. and C.I.T., and multinational corporations, full use will be made, as is already the case in certain subject areas, of the exceptional skill set which we are fortunate to have in our neighbourhood. Future policy development will involve greater parental input and curriculum planning will be conducted in accordance with recommendations. The board noted and gave consideration to the issue raised in relation to circular 31/2011. Déanfaimid gach iarracht réimse níos leithne d'ábhair léitheorieachta a chur sna ranganna agus iarracht a dhéanamh corpoideachas a mhúineadh trí mheán na gaeilge.

A full review of the progress of the implementation, as outlined above, will be formally reviewed by the Board of Management by the end of the 2015-2016 academic year.